

memorable for the participants and their families. Students compete for more than \$1,000 in scholarship prizes and have the opportunity to see for the first time their own artwork in a professional gallery setting.

Sharon has also coordinated countless town halls, roundtables, fairs and festivals outreach booths, and numerous other community engagements. The events often grapple with serious topics such as gun control, the opioid epidemic, health care, and she has always striven to ensure that they are meaningful exchanges of information and viewpoints for attendees.

One particular area into which Sharon has thrown herself and her considerable energy is the Military Service Academy nomination process for VA-11. She organizes and coordinates the advisory boards from each service academy, sets the interview calendar, supports the deliberations, and in the end helps nominate the future military leaders of our nation. Under Sharon's leadership, our district is routinely in the top three nationally for having the most students accepted into one of the prestigious U.S. Military Academies. For Sharon, it is a labor of love and service to both our country and the promising young students who seek to serve their nation in uniform.

This past year as we endured the COVID-19 pandemic, Sharon once again stepped into the breach, deferring her retirement by working tirelessly to help constituents who have faced personal tragedies and financial hardships. During the pandemic, Sharon has helped small businesses secure desperately needed grants and loans, helped families resolve issues with economic impact payments, and made every effort to ensure that our constituents who were stuck abroad were able to make it back to the United States safely. In 2020 alone, Sharon and our staff were able to help more than 1,800 individuals overcome personal crises directly related to the global pandemic.

Madam Speaker, Sharon Stark is a model public servant and I ask my colleagues to join me in wishing Sharon Stark health and happiness as she concludes a distinguished career in service to her country and community. There are people who have their health, a roof over their head, or food on the table thanks to Sharon. I am proud to have had her lead my district offices for the past 13 years and represent me in our community. Our office, constituents, and district will miss her immensely; as will I, and I wish her nothing but the best in retirement in which she will be able to spend more time with her husband Seth, her daughter Christine, and her granddaughter Jacqueline. Job well done Sharon Stark.

OPPOSITION TO THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE OBJECTION

HON. RON KIND

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 6, 2021

Mr. KIND. Madam Speaker, today is supposed to be a celebration of our democracy—the peaceful transfer of power in our Country. Instead we saw mob rule descend on our Nation's Capitol. That's why I rise today in defense of a pillar of our democracy—the right for a free and fair election decided by the will

of the voters and, ultimately, respected and accepted by the losing candidate and their supporters.

The other side can indulge in all the conspiracy theories they want, but when you involve the integrity of our elections in my home State of Wisconsin, well then I have a problem.

In our federal system of government, the administration of elections are controlled by our States—not Congress.

What happens in Wisconsin is up to Wisconsin—not Washington.

Our job in Congress is to count the electoral college votes, not overturn them.

Wisconsin has a long history of open, fair, and accurate elections because of the laws that our State has established and executed by 2,000 state and local officials, and countless volunteers, all who take their responsibility seriously with the highest form of honesty, integrity, fairness, and accuracy.

What is being attempted here tonight is an attempt to invalidate 3.3 million valid Wisconsin votes merely because their preferred candidate didn't win.

But if they succeed, democracy dies and dictatorship reigns.

The Trump campaign has filed state and federal court cases challenging the outcome of the vote in Wisconsin—all of which have been dismissed due to lack of any evidence of fraud.

Wisconsin Supreme Court Justice Brian Hagedorn, who was former Republican Governor Scott Walker's chief legal counsel, wrote in dismissing one of these challenges:

"We are invited to invalidate the entire presidential election in Wisconsin by declaring it 'null'—yes, the whole thing . . . this is a dangerous path we are being asked to tread. The loss of public trust in our constitutional order resulting from the exercise of this kind of judicial power would be incalculable."

And he is not alone in that assessment.

The former Republican Speaker of the House from Wisconsin, Paul Ryan, said in a statement:

"Efforts to reject the votes of the electoral college and sow doubt about Joe Biden's victory strike at the foundation of our republic.

It is difficult to conceive of a more anti-democratic and anti-conservative act than a federal intervention to overturn the results of state-certified elections and disenfranchise millions of Americans.

The fact that this effort will fail does not mean it will not do significant damage to American democracy."

He concluded by stating:

"The Trump campaign had ample opportunity to challenge election results, and those efforts failed from lack of evidence . . . Joe Biden's victory is entirely legitimate."

Or consider the third ranking Republican leader in this House, Rep. LIZ CHENEY who described this attempt as "deeply troubling".

She went on to state:

"This is directly at odds with the Constitution's clear text and our core beliefs as Republicans."

"Doing so" she said "Would be establishing a tyranny of Congress and stealing power from the States and the people in those States."

Finally consider what my friend and Republican colleague from Wisconsin, MIKE GALLAGHER, had to say about this:

"I just don't think we want to endorse the principle that January 6 is a legitimate forum for Congress to overturn the will of the States and the people . . . if you've endorsed that principle, then you've already destroyed the idea of American government. At least you've destroyed the conservative idea of American government."

What these Republican leaders understand is this—

If Congressional Members vote to reject valid Presidential electors for invalid reasons, There is nothing anyone can do about it.

The ugly truth is that, despite a nationwide vote, fenced in with legal and technical safeguards, after 244 years of history, the U.S. President is elected on the honor system of 535 Members of Congress, each sworn to preserve, protect, and defend our Constitution and our representative democracy enshrined in it.

It's not an oath to any individual or to any party.

Now it's easy to play war when you think that you're firing blanks, but these are not blanks being fired at our Constitution.

This is dangerous today because of the collateral damage that is being done to the sanctity of the ballot box.

It is also dangerous because it now provides a blueprint for next time.

President Trump will not be successful this time, but next time when some authoritarian wannabe takes a run at our Constitution, all bets are off.

We have a tendency in this Country to kick our Democracy around like it's a football—it's more like an egg, very fragile. You break it, good luck putting it back together again.

Please, do not put Donald Trump ahead of our Constitution, ahead of the rule of law, ahead of the sanctity of the ballot box.

Vote no on this attempt to overturn a valid election.

Vote no on this objection.

ELECTION IRREGULARITIES

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 6, 2021

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, after rigorous analysis and much reflection, I will not oppose the counting of certified electoral votes from any state.

I share some of the concerns about election irregularities. Today's proceedings give Congress the opportunity to raise concerns about alleged election wrongdoing in several states which I hope will ultimately lead to bipartisan state investigations and reform to ensure fair and free elections.

Today, however, Congress is tasked with counting the electoral votes sent by each state. Nullifying the electors of any state requires proof that electors were not "lawfully certified" according to state laws.

In early December, Attorney General William Barr told the Associated Press that "U.S. attorneys and FBI agents have been working to follow up specific complaints and information they've received, but 'to date, we have not seen fraud on a scale that could have effected a different outcome in the election.'"

All elections in the United States must be free and fair—any action to subvert, cheat,